

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS

REGULAR MEETING

Monday, April 11, 2000

Present: June Bailey*, James Johnston, Joe McLeland, M.S. Mitchell, Trix Niernberger, and Leon Robinson

Absent: William Sanders

Also Present: Glen Dey – Northeast Heights Neighborhood Association; Willard Burton – Matlock Heights Neighborhood Association; Charles Doughty; and Larry Hoetmer, Doug Kupper, Jerry Liebst, David McGuire, Janice McKinney, and Maryann Crockett (Staff)

President Mitchell called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

1. **Discussion of Grove Park**. Director Kupper stated that the consultants, Savoy, Ruggles and Bohm, were developing a master plan for the park. He said once the design team completed the specifications, they would provide the Task Force a list of materials and costs so the Task Force could raise additional funds or generate donations of materials and supplies. He said the City would be responsible for completing the park infrastructure such as roads, football fields, grading, topsoil, restrooms, etc.

Dr. Glen Dey, Northeast Heights Neighborhood Association, said he would like to facilitate communication between the Department of Park and Recreation and the Task Force on this project. He requested that he be sent a note or E-mail when Grove Park was discussed on the Park Board agenda. He added that he would like to affirm that this is a neighborhood park that serves all ages and groups of people within the area. He said he would encourage representatives from each group to sit down during the planning process to discuss anything they can do to assist the City with the project.

Willard Burton, Matlock Heights Neighborhood Association, briefly reviewed the list of businesses and organizations that had pledged funds and materials for development of the park. He said Grove Park was a park whose time had come and that the City needed to continue the development process.

Mitchell mentioned contacting the Police/Community Police regarding the proposed road through the park. There was brief discussion concerning the road going through the park, not just ending in a cul-de-sac, the width of the road in terms of public safety and the possibility of it becoming blocked or “log jammed”, park hours and crime prevention through landscaping. Burton asked about the Hoop City project. Staff said they would check on the status of Hoop City and report back to the Board. Staff added that they would let the board know when the park master plan would be presented to the City Council.

2. **Discussion of Planning/Scheduling City Tennis Clinics.** Johnston said he felt that recreation programming was going backwards in terms of scheduling and conducting tennis clinics. He said he was speaking as a resident who has participated in City public tennis, which he felt used to be an excellent program. He felt that the contemplated use of the Ralph Wulz Riverside Tennis Center (RWRTC) was wrong in terms of reaching large groups of children and that the Park Board should rededicate tennis program activities. He asked the chairman to recognize Charles Doughty and mentioned that Mr. Doughty has never been consulted about how the City's tennis program should be run.

Mr. Doughty stated that he was a "tennis nut" and that he realized the importance of tennis in terms of developing positive values in youth. He said last year tennis was taught eight hours a day at McAdams. He said this year, it has been reduced to 3 hours a day. In addition, last year a full week of tennis was offered, but this year it has been reduced to two days. He commented that the United States Tennis Association was pushing tennis to inner city kids and that he had that same goal. He provided board members a hand out entitled "*Why Play Tennis?*" by Jack L. Groppel, Ph.D.

Johnston said he feels staff should be developing tennis programs in neighborhoods where tennis courts already exist instead of pushing kids to go to the RWRTC. Staff explained that some of the forty-two tennis courts located at various park facilities throughout the City were in poor condition and could not be played on. They mentioned that funds were available in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP); however, court repair/resurfacing was being completed in phases. Jerry Liebst, Program Development Coordinator, clarified that the tennis lessons being offered through the Summer of Discovery (SOD) Program were independent from other City tennis programs. He said the primary goal of SOD was to introduce children to a variety of different sports. He commented that City staff has worked with Mr. Doughty and representatives from the Mo-Connolly Brinker organization in the past and that they would be willing to do so again to develop additional tennis programs.

3. **Discussion of Park Hours.** Director Kupper said he has received several inquiries from neighborhood associations and the Police Department regarding park hours. He asked the Board to think about park and recreation facilities in terms of how they should function and what the hours of operation should be. He commented that he would like to get input from the Park Board, District Advisory Boards (DAB), neighborhood associations and other user groups and asked board members to talk to their constituents. He mentioned several scenarios such as outdoor facilities without lights closing at sundown, etc. He commented that he was not looking for a decision at this meeting, but wanted to open up dialog on the issue.

*June Bailey present – 4:30 p.m.

Niernerberger mentioned requesting feedback from Wichita Independent Neighborhoods (WIN) and the Youth Council. She said she would like to get some feedback from kids. There was general discussion concerning use of City parks and the activities that take place in them after hours.

4. **Discussion of Standard Rules Signage.** Director Kupper stated that he would like input from the Board on development of some standard rules signage. He asked them to think

about what information should be posted, color schemes, and developing a more positive approach to informing the public of park rules and regulations.

5. **Discussion of Mayor's Racism Initiative.** Niernberger stated that two overview groups had been formed as a result of Mayor Knight's racism initiative. She said she would like the Park Board to take up the issue themselves and examine department policies and procedures, as well as just have a general discussion on ways to improve parks and make them less segregated. She said she had a lot of ideas she would like to discuss with the Board. Johnston said he thought her request was nebulous and asked what she was suggesting the Park Board do? As an example, Niernberger stated that pools close at 6:00 p.m. which did not allow for family activity in the evening. She mentioned that people with resources joined private clubs and that we end up having segregated facilities. She suggested the Board visit the new aquatic facility in Wellington, which she said attracted people from as far away as Wichita. She said as the department improves facilities, the Board needed to evaluate some of the policies/procedures and perhaps ask for more funding in order to eliminate racism or make park facilities more acceptable to a wider range of people. She provided board members a hand out which was an article from the Wichita Eagle entitled "POTENTIAL Wichita parks needs and deserve improvements" dated April 8, 2000.

Staff commented that part of the issue was a matter of resources. For Example, the pools currently do not have lights either in the pool or around them. Staff also mentioned activities such as midnight basketball leagues and other programs as a way to try to accommodate recreational opportunities for second shift workers. Niernberger commented that as pools deteriorate, fewer people use them. Bailey mentioned that pools hours at Orchard Park were extended last year as the result of a request from the neighborhood association. She also stated that the Department of Park and Recreation treated all park patrons equally.

5. **Legal Opinion – Off Agenda Items.** Mitchell referred board members to Blaise Plummer's E-mail dated 4/7/00. There was brief discussion.

McLeland made a motion to take up an off agenda item. The motion died due to lack of a second.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:20 p.m.

M.S. Mitchell, President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk